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BOOK REVIEW

THE PEOPLE OF THE POLAR NORTH. A Record by KNUD RASMUSSEN. Compiled from Danish Originals, and edited by G. HERRING. Illustrations by Count Harald Moltke. Philadelphia, Lippincott, 1908.

This book is a translation and adaptation of the two Danish books, "Nye Mennesker" and "Under Nordenvindens Svøbe," two of the best books on the Eastern Eskimo that have appeared in a long time. The editor underestimates previous work when saying that "the Eskimos as a race are an unexplored and unexploited people," and does an injustice to an eminent scholar when claiming that Rink, our best authority on the Greenland Eskimo, did not know the Greenlandic language; but he has put ethnologists under obligations by making the book accessible to the English-speaking public. The first of the two books had been translated before into German, but with the omission of some of the interesting traditions recorded by Rasmussen. The first part of the book is taken up with graphic descriptions of Eskimo life, which, while true to nature in their essential elements, still contain enough of the individuality of the author to make them one of the best available descriptions of Eskimo life from a literary point of view, but require at least a slight amount of caution on the part of the ethnologist. The difference of conception comes out clearly when these descriptions are compared to Mrs. Signe Rink's simple records of Eskimo life as given by the Eskimo themselves in her book "Kajakmänner." The second part, which contains primitive views of life among the Smith Sound Eskimo, is replete with valuable ethnological material, which shows clearly the close resemblance between the beliefs of the Smith Sound people and those of the west coast of Baffin Land. The tales given in Part III are also quite in accord with those known in other parts of Arctic America. A number of animal fables deserve particular mention. These fables, which are so characteristic of the folk-lore of the Eskimo and of some of the northern Indian tribes of America, have received some attention since 1883, and samples have been collected from all parts of the Arctic coast. A few of the tales given in this collection are identical with those recorded by Dr. A. L. Kroeber in 1899 in this Journal, and collected from the mouths of a number of Eskimo who visited New York. The second division of the book is devoted to a translation of Rasmussen's descriptions of West Greenland, which in character are similar to his descriptions from Smith Sound; while the last part is devoted to a description of the east coast of Greenland, and contains some interesting notes on customs, shamanism, and a few folk-tales. This material is of value as supplementing Holm's work on Angmagssalik. The English edition contains a considerably larger number of illustrations than either the Danish or the German editions. The illustrations are from sketches by Count Harald Moltke. A comparison of the folk-lore material contained in the German edition of the book and of the folk-lore of Baffin Land will be found in vol. xv of the "Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History," pp. 567, 568.

F. Boas.